

Virginia Department of Veterans Services

900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
www.virginiaforveterans.com

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 27, 2007

Contact: Anne Atkins
(804) 371-0441

Virginia's veterans cemeteries growing in popularity

SUFFOLK—Rows of white markers standing in tight formation come into view as you approach the Albert G. Horton, Jr., Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk, Virginia. The wide drive into the cemetery and the manicured grounds on either side convey a sense of pride and reverence. Everything, from the flags snapping smartly in the breeze to the immaculate rows of markers, the gleaming columbarium and the pristine committal shelter suggest military order and precision.

Most Virginians are unaware of the Commonwealth's two state-operated veterans cemeteries—the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk and the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia. But, that may be changing.

Interments at both cemeteries have increased nearly every year. During its first year of operation, the Veterans Cemetery at Amelia had 95 interments. In contrast, this past fiscal year, 231 interments were made. Similarly, the Horton Cemetery had 255 interments during its first year of operation, fiscal year 2005. During the past fiscal year, however, there were 510 interments.

Virginia boasts 15 national veterans cemeteries operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs plus the Arlington National Cemetery operated by the Department of the Army. However, for the most part, only the Quantico, Culpeper and Arlington National Cemeteries are accepting new burials.

The veterans cemeteries in Suffolk and Amelia are the only state-operated cemeteries. Both are relatively new—and unknown. The Horton cemetery opened in 2004 and the Amelia cemetery opened in 1997, providing veterans with access to burial benefits in areas lacking a national cemetery.

“Overwhelmingly, visitors to the cemeteries are surprised that they exist. Then, they comment on how beautiful they are,” stated Dan Kemano, Director of Cemeteries for the

Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS). “Our state-operated cemeteries are indistinguishable from national ones; we operate using the same policies and procedures and hold ourselves to the same exacting standards,” added Kemano.

Any veteran with an honorable discharge who is a Virginia resident at the time of death or who was a Virginia resident at the time of enlistment is eligible for interment at one of these state-operated cemeteries. Plus, the spouse and, in some cases, a dependent child may also be interred.

There is no cost for the grave site for the veteran and only a modest \$300 fee for the spouse. Opening and closing the site as well as a memorial marker are included. Both cemeteries accommodate in-ground burials and offer columbaria and ground sites for cremated interments. Each cemetery offers a committal shelter or chapel where funeral services are held. Military funeral honors are normally provided.

“Most of our interments are older veterans, especially from World War II and Korea. We’re seeing an increase, however, in Vietnam-era veterans as well,” said Kemano. “And, we’ve interred Afghan and Iraq casualties.”

“We expect interments to continue to increase, especially as the Vietnam-era veterans age,” said Kemano. The Department of Veterans Services is already planning ahead for the increase. A third veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia is in the early stages of development, and the agency just commissioned the University of Virginia to conduct a study on future cemetery needs for Virginia veterans. The report will be presented to the agency this fall.

“With nearly 740,000 veterans living in Virginia, we have a huge potential for interments,” commented Kemano. “We encourage every veteran to consider burial at one of our cemeteries. It’s a fitting tribute and honor for anyone who has served his or her country.”

Veterans may file a pre-application for burial at one of the cemeteries. Pre-application determines eligibility for burial and lessens the burden on loved ones at the time of death. Pre-applications may be filed at either cemetery during business hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pre-applications are also available at www.virginiaforveterans.com.

The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery is located at 5310 Milners Road in Suffolk; the Virginia Veterans Cemetery at Amelia is located at 10300 Pridesville Road in Amelia. Both cemeteries are open to the public during daylight hours. Cemetery administrative offices are open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.